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THE
GRAND 'CHRONOLOGICAL

DISPUTE,

OR THE QUESTION,
IN WHAT CENTURY

IS THE PRESENT YEAR,

1800?

ATTEMPTED TO BE DECIDED.

BY

JOHN ROSE.



“ Throw *Years* away ?
“ Throw *Empires*, and be blameless. Moments seize :
“ Heav’n’s on their wing !”

YOUNG.

BRISTOL :

Printed and sold by J. ROSE, Broadmead. ——— Price 3d.

Sold also by the Booksellers of Bristol : S. Hazard, Bath ;
and Howard and Evans, Long-Lane, London.

A Certain publication, now, for many reasons, deservedly exploded, began with a most beautiful and striking aphorism, viz. "The sun needs no inscription to distinguish it from darkness:" And, to me, it is equally as obvious, that the very date of the present year, 1800, renders all discussion needless to distinguish it from the commencement of a century.

But as there are some who cannot discern the solar rays, and, consequently, cannot discriminate between night and day; so there are others who are, apparently, imperceptive of numeration, and, consequently, cannot determine betwixt a hundred and an unit.

For this reason, and because I have been applied to by several for my opinion on this momentous question, which has been agitated with zeal sufficient to kindle the flames of war amid rival nations; and, by the way, wars have been carried on for objects far more insignificant: For these reasons (I say) I shall endeavor to remove the film from the eyes of those who are willing to see; and if there should be any readers otherwise disposed, I entreat they will not be angry with me, but pass this little pamphlet by: I mean merely to oblige as many as possible with one trouble, without offence to others.

Nothing tends more to darken the understanding than false conclusions drawn from true premises: Thus some atheistical philosophers, because Nature is so similar and constant, deny the finger of God in her operations; and thereby wander further from the light of Truth than the most unobserving of His works in Nature. I shall therefore aim, to correct the false conclusions drawn, from admitted premises, by those who maintain that the 18th century expired with the year 1799; and, by that means, hope to win greater attention, and with more facility to effect my purpose.

They assert, that the beginning of time, or the commencement of a new epoch in chronology, must be at *nulla*, or 0, and not at 1; and, therefore, they conclude, that the year 1 must be the second year, and so on, till 100 years are completed at the expiration of the year 99; so making the whole of the first year of the century a cypher, and carrying over the year 100 as the *nulla* year to begin, in the same manner, the century following.

It is readily allowed that we must begin to date from any given epoch *at* 0; but we are not to pass over a whole year *from* that epoch, no, nor a single moment, as a cypher. There is no *nulla* in time, except at

the right hand of some number to encrease it. We may with as much propriety call a century a nulla, as a moment ; and so insist that century 1 was the second series of a hundred years.

Time is divided (with very general consent) into years, months, days, hours, minutes, moments. Each smaller division is part of a larger, whose completion is accelerated every second ; but can never arrive at its period till every second thereof has existed.

Let us pay attention to the clock : We are apt to be convinced by our senses. Let us stop the machine precisely at twelve ; and then, as at 0, anxious to begin a new æra, we will put the pendulum again in motion. Fully attent to the importance of our object, let us again arrest its motion, the instant the moment hand has arrived at the 59th second. What then will be the progress time has made ? Surely not one minute : Yet it wants only the sixtieth part. We began at 0, but we did not continue in 0 the hundreth part of the first moment ; we were then *in* the first moment, or moment 1, and when the hand had reached the mark 1 then the second moment began : it has now reached the mark 59, and 59 moments are completed, but no more ; it

must have traversed the whole of the next moment before 60 moments, or a minute, would have been completed : that is, it must have arrived at the end of the 60th moment, and not have stopped at the beginning of it ; for the end of the 59th is the exact point where the 60th must begin.

Had we stopped at the end of the 59th *minute*, the same truth, in parity of reason, would have been obvious : The minute hand would indeed have arrived at the commencement of the 60th minute, but the hour could not have been terminated till the hand had traversed the 60th minute to its last extremity. — And yet, we began at 0 ; the premises at first admitted.

So if a man had been born at 0, or the exact point at which any epoch began ; at the end of the first year, or termination of year 1 (the same thing) he would be one year old, and that instant commence his second ; and so, of course, at the last period of the 99th year he would be 99 years old : from that period, if he should live but one moment, he would be one moment advanced in his hundredth or centenary year : but if he were to die whilst Time should be traversing the last month, or any shorter division of *that* year, he could not have lived a century.

Methinks I hear some say they are now convinced ; and I should be happy to have convinced all, in fewer words too, for I am not fond of circumlocution, altho' too often occasioned by my own deficit in perspicuity. But, however, it seems I must not get off so easily.

Pray, Mr. Horary, says one, with a wise sneer, When your clock has stricken twelve are not twelve hours passed ; and must you wait till it strikes one before you commence another series ?

Another says, I do not comprehend your clock-work : Answer *me* one plain question, If a man sets out from this or any other place, to walk a hundred, or century if you please, of regularly marked miles, will he not have completed his journey when he shall have come *to* the mark inscribed 100 ; or must he walk on till he comes to 101 ? — I say, Answer *me that* ! — Why the very question is a demonstration of itself ! Therefore a century of years must terminate when we come *to* date 100. — Must not it ?

A third, with more complacency, says, Sir, you are somewhat lame, and cannot probably keep pace with a traveller's steps so long a journey : I am a man of figures, and will *chalk* you out a shorter path. Attend to this nulla, or 0 ; that represents the

first moment of the first day of January instant, that is to say 1800. The next chalk, videlicet 1, which is placed at one inch from the former, represents the first moment of the year 1801. And so you see, Sir, I go on, mathematically, with exact distances, and in a regular series, till we arrive at this last chalk, videlicet 100, which represents the first moment of the year 1900. Now, Sir, if I had a son born *at* the critical moment first represented, is it not manifest that he will have lived a complete hundred years when he shall have attained to the first moment of the next hundredth year?

Now for answers.

To begin with my last querist, I can only reply, That all he has done and said, is exactly true, and perfectly demonstrative; but that if his critical point, 0, or nulla, had represented the first moment of the first year, or year 1, instead of the hundredth, either *at* the first commencement or any other given epoch of time, his son's centenary year would, as now, have been completed at the hundredth chalk; which, for his mathematical amusement, he may please to try, whilst I turn myself to the other querists.

Next then for the pedestrian demonstrator. — I have read somewhere of "Helps for short memories:" I presume this inter-

rogator has need of such. He does not understand clock-work, or every click would furnish him with a memento. Suppose then he were to take the proposed journey, and to compute his walk at a mile a year; he would then, perhaps, understand, that when he came *to* the date of his 100th year he had many weary steps to make before he could have come to the 100th mile-mark. The fact is, he would be *in the date* of his mile 100 from the beginning of it. So also in his 100th year from its commencement to its LATEST MOMENT; which, at the end of his tedious peregrination, he may denominate, if he think proper, the centenary mile stone; and that he possibly would remember. If not, let him walk back again, a mile in a year: he would then at the end of his first year's travel arrive at the 99th mile-mark; at the end of the 99th year, at the 1st mile-mark; at which point he would have to commence his 100th mile's journey and his 100th year's date together; and he would then find, travelling at his old rate, that he must once more *close* the centenary year before his trial could be ended. But this second task would be necessary only for *scholars* in the division of time, who *must* PROVE by multiplication; — or for those who may mistake a stone for the mile leading *to or from* it.

To the first querist, I must assent, that when the clock has stricken twelve, twelve hours *are* passed; and we must *not* wait till it strikes one before we begin a new series. — We *begin* a new series, the very instant the twelfth hour is passed, and not before: So also we begin a new century, the very instant an hundredth year is passed, and not before.

The better to elucidate what I have last said, Let us place before us a clock describing 100 hours. Let each hour be the representative of a year; and, as such, let the revolution of each hour be described by a small hand traversing its time in 365 distinct divisions. We put our clock in motion, with both hands exactly at their last points, which we will, for the present, call nullas, because no time hath yet been measured from them.

On the first movement of the small hand it points to the first day, or its first division of the year: at the same instant the other hand as faithfully describes its proportionate advance: and What is the year they are describing? Undoubtedly the first. Thus the hands travel on, in mutual harmony and correspondence, till the small hand having again reached the point from which it set out, the other is exactly at one. Then, I think

it must be plain (from the representation) that the first year of the clock's chronology is passed. In other words, that the whole of year 1 is passed.

When the small hand has made 99 revolutions, and the other has, in due course, arrived at the point marked 99, it will be fully as plain, that 99 years are passed; and that the instant the hands set off again they will be describing the 100th year, — that is, they will represent the first day (alias January 1) of the year 100; which cannot be complete till the small hand has described all the parts thereof, when both hands will be again, for the first time since their departure, where they originally set out.

If this be not already understood, Let there be a cuckoo to repeat the year the clock is representing, every time the small hand describes a division thereof [like as we write, in the present year, Jan 1, *One thousand eight hundred!* Jan. 2, *One thousand eight hundred!* and so on, to Dec. 31, *One thousand eight hundred!*] If it is understood, we shall see that the clock *strikes* only at the end of the year, but that its duration is silently marked by the small hand, as we daily mark it by transactions which make a variety of noise.

Those who cannot from hence comprehend, that eighteen hundred years, beginning at O, will not be complete till the 18th hundred year shall be concluded: — let them, if they so incline, watch the clock I have exhibited for 18 perfect revolutions, being careful to count the days also in each year as they go on, and at length multiply them by 1800 to prove that there be no mistake.

But there is a report, that some learned *astronomer* has *pronounced* the present year to be in the 19th century; and that, from the customary mode of beginning with nulla; — It may be gathered, from what I at first advanced respecting clocks, that I am no disciple of the astronomer's; and I shall now, notwithstanding so profound a knowledge is in opposition, briefly apply the doctrine I then laid down to the measurement of time by the revolutions of the planets.

When the Almighty first created those magnificent orbs of light, the exact point at which each of them was to begin its circle, may well be described by an O, or nulla; because, no time had then been marked by their celestial courses: But when the fiat of their Creator set those radiant bodies in motion, they instantly began their various, yet harmonious, revolutions; both round the

fun as the grand centre of their system, and each respectively upon its own axis.

Now will any person (not an astronomer) maintain, that those vast luminaries were not each describing its *first* revolution, the moment it commenced its career; Or will they denominate the whole of its primary motion, (that is its first day or rotation upon its axis) much less its complete circuit in the heavens, by a nulla, o, or cypher! Could it have been so, Saturn would not have finished his solar nulla, till the planet we inhabit had made thirty solar revolutions, or, according to the wisdom of the wise astronomer, but twenty-nine preceded by revolution cypher!

—— Nay, for all I know, and, perhaps, for all which any astronomer may know, there may be some planet in some other system, which has not yet completed its first circuit (or, according to our astronomer, circuit o) in the immensity of space!

I think, however, it would be more agreeable to our capacities, and more consistent with common sense, were we to denominate the first revolution of any planet, say the solar revolution of the earth (for that is most applicable to our present purpose) revolution or year 1. Pursuing that mode, we should find, that 100 complete revolutions, beginning at or from o (or the commence-

ment of time) would terminate with the end, and not with the beginning, of the year 100.

I earnestly hope that my readers, especially those who, like me, are convinced by the date of the *present* year, will excuse the apparent tautologies I have been guilty of in this little (typographically extempore) production. I should love to receive a sentence in a word, a volume in a sentence: but I am very conscious that I possess not the happy talent of communicating my lucubrations with any thing like paucity.

I am, therefore, still inclined to say somewhat more upon the subject.

That it has been customary in modern times to date *in* the year of our Lord, and to express with correspondent figures, is well known; thus, in all acts of Parliament passed and proclamations issued, in this country, even in the last year, which some people of extraordinary learning wish to denominate the 1800th, the date was expressly *in the year* of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, agreeing with the figures, which could be representatives of no other year *in* our epoch, viz. 1, 7, 9, 9. — For my part I deem the custom very proper; and find it sanctioned by writers of earlier times, who dated, after the same manner, *in the year* of the world (*Anno Mundi*.)

I do not find, in any instance, that the ancients added one to the number or date of the year, to make tale in lieu of a year 0, or Anno Mundi Nothing.

Moses, whose writings commence with the creation of the world, of course with the origin of its duration or TIME, altho' he mentions the beginning without date, gives us a number or date to the *day* in which it *began*; he calls it the first day, or day 1. He goes on, in the same manner, to number or date the seven first days of time, calling the last of them the seventh day, or day number *seven*, or SABBATH day, or day of rest, as the word, in the originally tongue, is by all commentators determined to signify. — The Jews, dispersed over the face of the earth, weekly commemorate, to this very time, the seventh day, as day SEVEN or SeBeNG, [whence the English word] which signifies, not only Sabbath or rest, but also, *Fullness, Completion*. — If the inspired writer had described a century of days, or a century of years, he most undoubtedly would have continued his numeration in the series in which he began, and would, of course, have called the centenary (day or) year the 100th, or (day or) year 100.

But some sceptical objector, and a sceptic indeed I am well persuaded almost every

reader will now deem such an one, may say, You have truly proved that the seventh day, according to Moses, at the commencement of time, was the sabbatic day, or day of rest, fullness, and completion, of the week ; but you have not proved, that such seventh day, or completion of the first week, was not ended with day 6, as hath lately been maintained of the 18th century, viz. that it expired with the year 1799.

In pity to such incredulity, I would reply, that the proof is already implied, by Moses's denominating the first diurnal measurement of time the *first* day. So far from being inspired, he might justly have been deemed mad, had he denominated it a cypher, and accounted that grand original day a nothing in which the Almighty said, " Let there be light, and there was light ! " — yet, not quite so mad as those who would describe the *whole* of the first year by nothing, and then, most cunningly, add that nothing to 99, to make a hundred years ! — I presume, that every rational person would prefer adding 1 to 99.

As a farther confirmation, that the seventh day in Moses's history of the world, could not be concluded with day the sixth, he gives us a full account of the sixth day (in which man was made after five days were passed

in the year 1) and tells us, that the evening and the morning were the sixth day, before he makes mention of the seventh; consequently, no part of the seventh could have been included in day the sixth. He afterwards describes the seventh (SeBeNG) the sabbath, rest, fullness, completion, of the first week; which the Almighty blessed and sanctified, as such.

And now, to conclude, let me advise all those learned gentry, who have issued proclamations for the dissolution of the eighteenth century, set it to rest, written its epitaph, &c. &c. to spare themselves all further trouble upon the subject, till the dissolution of the *present* year, when they may renew their labours with more propriety, unless TIME shall previously set *them* to rest, and *their* epitaphs be written in the very period which they would have prematurely consigned to oblivion.

Altho' I may already have said ninety-nine things on the topic before us, I have a peculiar desire to say a hundredth, which, however, will not be completed till its finish; — I say, therefore, that I am, on this and on all other occasions, the Public's most devoted humble servant,

J. ROSE.

BRISTOL, JAN. 15, 1800.

Printed by John Rose, Broadmead, Bristol.

